



via pacis
(the way of peace)

Des Moines Catholic Worker
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On Hospitality

The Christmas holidays brought two friends from Dubuque to help in the hospitality so staff could spread out for a bit. Nettie Post of the Dubuque Catholic Worker filled in while Frank visited Jacquee in Pennsylvania. John Wilson, a Dominican seminarian, also spent some time with us after New Year's before beginning a retreat. New people in the community always bring a renewed sense of life for the rest of us. They also allow us to check each other out with prospective long terms staff. We offered Nettie and John our standard contract: \$5 a week, a roof over your head, and all the beans you can eat. And us, on top of it. Wonder why they turned us down.

Mike Smith is now at the Kansas City Catholic Worker to provide new blood in the staff. Angie Calvert and Beth Seberger have put in a super-human effort at keeping the houses going these past five years. Hopefully Mike, with support from Ann Dietzman, can keep the spirit alive.

Some members of our community have joined with other religious activists to create the Justice and Peace Center, one corner of which is now my home. The house at 1521 6th Street (50314) will house a justice and peace center, which we are still defining, a community organization training center, and continuing education.

Discussions

Part of the Catholic Worker tradition is the round table discussion where people join together to verbalize and clarify thoughts. The liturgy is celebrated every Friday night at the house (713 Indiana, one block north of University) at 8 p.m., followed by a discussion.

Jan. 20: Women in the Priesthood; Suzanne Peterson, Episcopal priest.

Jan. 27: Priests for Equality; John Bertogli.

Feb. 3: The Catholic Worker Movement; staff.

Feb. 10: Nuclear Technology--Uncontrollable? Al Razor

Feb. 17: Tom Cordaro

Feb. 17: Evangelization on College Campuses in the Midwest; Tom Cordaro

Mar. 3: Subsistence Farming in Iowa; Al and Mary Razor.

Mar. 10: The Catholic Worker Movement and the Church; a dialogue with Bishop Dingman.

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Pops



Ed Woolery died at the age of 72. I knew him for a year and he introduced me to a lot of friends. I've got nothing to say about death, but that it makes you think. So I write this article for my dead friend because he made me think. I loved him.

Everybody knew him as "Pops." That was his name. Pops lived caddy-corner from us in an old room in an old house. That was his home and he loved it. You could always see him on a warm day sitting on the steps with some friends, or sometimes alone, but always with his dog Sparky. And if he wasn't there we was sitting in front of his kitchen window looking out on 8th street. I'd bring him over a sack of food sometimes, and whether I did or not, he'd always offer me a "hooka": a shot of wine. And that shot of Tokay was some of the best hospitality I've ever been offered, because I knew what it meant.

Old Pops enjoyed life. You'd never hear him talk much about the bad. I heard people say, "look at

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that poor man, I feel sorry for him." But I never felt sorry for him. I idolized him. He knew things you'll never find in books, unless he wrote them himself. What he had he loved. It was the little things in living that made him up. His old dog, a "hooka" with friends. He said to me once "People say this and that is no count. But if it don't hurt nobody, and it makes you happy, there's no way you can call that no count."

Pops sang the blues. He worked hard until he couldn't work anymore. He did hospitality too, and he did it good. One time I was sitting outside with him and Willie and some others and he said to me, "How come you alls tryin' to act like us?" And I hope when I'm 70 or so in some old room, I hope I can think of Pops and smile. And I know I will. I'll smile because I made it.

And let me tell you, there's a lot of people like Pops in their rooms all day, some all alone and nobody knows of them. These are the people that teach us what the great masters sometimes forget to tell us. If there really are people in this world, life can't be no count. And if you ever met Ed "Pops" Woolery, you'd know what I mean. But if you never did meet him, I hope someday you will, because he's all over the place. So I pray for us all, that through our effort in trying to change the world and let personalism be our center for justice, I pray that we remember to go to them because sometimes they don't come to us.

--Ed Polich

A Deserted Place

I would like to spend a few minutes at the close of my Christmas retreat to reflect with all of you about the value of a deserted place. I will not try to speak to you as a theologian or a Thomas Merton for I am neither of these. I am a man. A young man. And I am the product of years and years of programming, some good, some not so good.

As I entered my "Deserted Place" free from the many distractions of everyday life, I felt the renewal of my relationship with Jesus, his love for me, his Spirit, and our ever present Father. I was drawn to the silence of my heart calling me to respond to Jesus the "puller"

My thoughts returned to the scriptures in Mark, Chapter Seven. "The Apostles returned to Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and what they had taught. He said to them, Come by yourselves to an out of the way place and rest a little while. People were coming and going in great numbers making it impossible for them to so much as eat...So Jesus and the Apostles went off in the boat to a "deserted place".

The strange thing about a "Deserted Place" is that it is not a removal from the world, but rather like the clearing of a fog, allowing us to view the world with greater perspective because we have entered into our very hearts. I believe this gives us the ability to become a more integral part of the world through reflection and preparation, so that we may truly become the 'church'. the

point to the kingdom.

When God speaks, he speaks within the tiny crevices of our hearts. In my heart he speaks of the poor, those hungry, so hungry for a look for healing love. A love that will help melt away the pain of being in want. These poor I speak of may have millions or they may have nothing. Our Lord speaks to me of the sick. People wrapped in pain, be it pain of body, soul, or mind. Our Lord speaks to me of the children of this age, children who are little, tiny, old, bearded, hump-shouldered, playing or dying, yet all children of all ages. Our Lord speaks to me of solitude in the midst of a napalm society. A society of bombs, aborted babies, mass starvation, poverty, and concentration camps called prisons. Is the body of Christ to survive in this the "late great planet earth"? Yes! If we go to our "Deserted place" we will learn to respond and not react, to love and not hate, finally to give and not rape. We need this place to pray, and listen to our hearts. A place where we can say, "Yes, all these things are not only outside of myself but also within me. Yes, I am accountable to my brother and sister." A place where we can slowly become God-Bearers or co-creators.

As I close I would like to wish all of us a blessed and happy new year. May it be a year energized by many "Deserted places". May we truly be Church the People who point to the Kingdom.

Edson

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A Pacifist on Abortion

This article is reprinted from the
Jonah House newsletter, Year One

by Jo McGowan

On May first of this year (1977), I was arrested with 1413 others, at the Seabrook nuclear power plant site, and spent 16 days in jail. On June 29, I was arrested, alone this time, in an abortion clinic in Amherst, Massachusetts, fined \$25, and sentenced to eight days in jail when I refused to pay. On August 6, Hiroshima Day, I was arrested with seventeen others at Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut, and spent four days in jail. On all three of these occasions, I was arrested for the same thing. Murder by nuclear poisoning, murder by abortion, and murder by nuclear weapons all result in the same thing: dead people.

There is no need to discuss (in this publication) the insanity of nuclear weapons and nuclear power. But abortion is something else. For a long time now, I have been bewildered by the almost total acceptance of abortion by the peace movement. I have tried over and over to understand how non-violent women and men can want to inflict such violence on another life. I still can't understand. I had hoped that my action in the abortion clinic would engender some discussion of the issue, at least among my friends. But although I have received nothing but support for my decision to go January, 1978



Robert McGovern

to jail, my reasons for going have only been commented on by three or four people. Hmmm. So I wrote this article, trying to make myself very clear, and now I'll just wait and see what happens.

I realize that abortion is very tied up with women's rights. As a woman, I, too, insist upon my right to control my body. My body is myself. But if I become pregnant, then it is no longer only my body in question. Another body, another life, now exists, and I can no more control my body by destroying my child than I can insure my safety by building Trident submarines. I ask this question in all seriousness: can we, as a non-violent people, ever claim that anyone, woman or man, has a right to kill another?

My friend Eddie wanted to know if I thought I could understand what it meant for a woman to give birth to a child she didn't want, and bring it into a world that

didn't want it either. No, Eddie, I'm not sure that I do. I'm not sure that I understand anything that I haven't experienced myself. I'm not sure that I understand what it is to be a poor parent worrying about my children being hungry. But I don't think the answer is to kill the children. I'm not sure that I understand what it means to be an old person living alone in Detroit, terrified to leave the apartment for fear of being mugged. But I don't think the answer is to beef up the police department and put more locks on the doors. I'm not sure that I understand what it means to be afraid that the Russians are going to invade us at any minute. But I don't think the answer is to pay war taxes and get a job at Electric Boat building Trident submarines. Shit, Eddie, you know, it's the whole system that has to change. A system that says the answer to rising crime is bigger prisons--that says the answer to child murders is capital punishment--that says the answer to the problem of killing people and sparing property is the neutron bomb--that says the answer to the problem of unwanted children is abortion.

Easy answers. Easy answers that make it possible for us to avoid dealing with what is really happening--or not happening. We're not loving each other, we're not caring. What amazes me is that we've been tricked successfully. How is it that we see so clearly what is happening when we are offered the arms race as the answer

to fear, but not when we are offered abortion as the answer to the continued oppression of women?

It seems clear to me that abortion is nothing more than another method devised to maintain the patriarchal system. As long as women are solely responsible for their pregnancies, we are no closer ideologically to where we want to be than we were fifty years ago. Look: as long as women are responsible



Rita Corbin

for selecting and using birth control; as long as women are responsible for deciding whether to carry their children to term or to abort; as long as women are responsible for the consequences of their decisions--dealing with the emotional/ physical results of abortion, or bringing up the child--we are exactly where they want us to be. We are still dealing on their terms. We are still accepting the idea that pregnancy and birth are women's problems to be dealt with by women--and abortion makes things easier. With abortion readily available, the community need not feel any

particular responsibility because there is nothing to feel responsible for; the woman has graciously taken care of her little "problem" and everyone can breathe a little easier.

This is what I think: a child born is community responsibility. A child whose mother or father is not prepared to care for it is even more so. But the influence of those with power is pervasive. They realize that if communities begin taking their responsibilities seriously, if their members begin caring for each other, then it will be but a short time before the communities had the power and they had none. So they have instituted countless means of alienating us



from our communities and ourselves. They have us working at things which have no relation to our lives. They give us just enough to keep us scrambling with each other for a job or a scholarship or whatever else it is we've been told we want. We are carefully taught from childhood that our primary responsibility is to ourselves and to our families and that if everyone minded his or her own business everything would be fine. Well, everything is fine. But for whom?

Look: I think abortion is just another clever tactic designed to lend credence to the idea that everyone solves one's own problems. Obviously, then, the only solution to the problem of an unwanted child is to kill it. Certainly the community will have nothing to do with it.

Of course, the best thing to believe is that it's not a child at all and then it isn't murder to kill it. I can't think of words strong enough to explain how much this confuses me. Have we so little imagination that we only believe in the life we see? Is it really true that because we cannot see a child, it is therefore not a child? We cannot see the lives of the children, women and men killed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but we feel them so strongly that every year on August 6 and 9, thousands of us vigil, fast and commit civil disobedience. How can a life destroyed by an atomic blast 32 years ago be any more or less real than a life destroyed by abortion today? Why is it that the peace movement sees so clearly the insanity of building weapons to insure peace, and fails almost entirely to see the equal insanity of taking away the rights of one to insure the rights of another.

The answers aren't easy. But then, We've never expected them to be. We talk about a world without weapons, without class, without prisons, without fear, with love. Can we even consider abortion?

Ah, dear brothers and sisters, it frightens me. If we buy this, what comes next?

A 20-year old inmate in the Polk County Jail died Tuesday afternoon at Mercy Hospital, where he was taken after jailers found him hanging by the neck in his cell, authorities said. Richard L. was found by jailers about 11:10 p.m. Monday, according to jail reports...

--Des Moines Register
December 28, 1978

home for new years

dear rick
hope things are well
glad you're finally
home for new years
sorry the trip was tough

just last year
you, your wife deb, Sandy and I
spent advent days together
meeting each other in the station
on our rocky journeys

was the road really bad rick
or did you refuse to drive well?
you ran away from home early
thinking home life was a lemon
but life as an early teen in Iowa City
isn't what it's cracked up to be

then came the kung fu lessons
the sure guarantee of manhood
reflecting all the violence back
man you were hot
Bruce Lee award and all

and the supermarket checkout girl
that you wore around your neck
and on your belt
as certified proof of manhood
at least that's what all
the ads said

for god's sake
why couldn't you play the game
fighting your friends
prooving to the enemy
that you qualified
for the rejection pile

too able bodied for welfare
too handicapped for employment
too bullheaded for training
and too emotional for manual work
(so it goes)

when the divorce was final
you finally found your place:
Polk County jail

why, dammit, why?
get your act together
that's where they wanted you
in the first place!

tell me rick
what's it really like?
is it like
popping a balloon with a pin
to release all the pressure?
then do you just float around
in slow motion
forever?

yah, rick
sorry the dam trip was tough
glad you're home for new years

but taking someone's life
even your own
is like spitting in nature's face
and taking what isn't yours
sorry

see ya soon

shalom

Joe

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The Feast of Holy Innocents:

then & now

by Frank Cordaro

December 28 is the Feast of the Holy Innocents. On this day, Christians around the world remember the innocent children of Bethlehem who were murdered by the state in its attempt to secure total sovereignty over life



Kathleen Rumpf

(Matthew 2: 16-17). In grade school, the sisters told us that these children, although unaware of it, gave their lives to protect the baby Jesus from his enemies. The fruit of their martyrdom was the time necessary for Jesus to grow and mature into the man who carried out his Father's business. I have always considered their deaths

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as noble ones - deaths warranting the crown of martyrdom and life everlasting.

On December 28, 1977, about fifteen people gathered in a convent in Rock Island, Ill., to spend a day and a half in shared remembrance of this Feast and its Innocents who are still with us today.

Early in December, we had heard that the Pentagon (never overly concerned with the sanctity of human life) is now in the business of buying the flesh of unborn children upon which to test the effects of its neutron bomb. Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, Sean McBride, reported that the Pentagon has imported 45,000 fetuses from South Korea to test the enhanced radiation effects of the neutron bomb on fresh human tissue. A South Korean Red Cross executive privately confirmed the report. For those of us who gathered at Rock Island, it is clear that the same dynamics of fear and violence which brought death to innocent life 1900 years ago are still operative in our society today. The connection between Herod's action and the actions of our Pentagon are all too clear, especially on this Feast of the Holy Innocents.

Like Herod, the Pentagon thinks that it can ensure its own security by destroying the life of our next generation. Like the children of Bethlehem, the unborn children of South Korea are unaware of their sacrifice. And like the fruit

of those innocent martyrs of Bethlehem, the meaning of the selling and buying of aborted South Korean babies must be seen in the light of the cross of Jesus Christ.

For a day and a half, fifteen FAITH filled people gathered to share their life and their faith. We spoke of the personal violence and fear that has, at times, ruled in our own lives. We shared the Herod that is in each of us, and the truth of the faith that the martyred Jesus is our redeemer.

On the afternoon of December 28, we chose to witness to this faith in Jesus through prayer and symbolic action. We gathered in a Church in Rock Island (about twenty strong by now) for a penitential rite:

"O God, we have acted perversely we have transgressed, we have sinned. We have done wickedly, we have done violence, we have submissively allowed evil to grow, we have passively stood by while millions of innocent beings are destroyed, we have, by our complicity, allowed death and destruction to utilize those materials necessary to promote life, and we have gone counter to the truth."

Then bread and wine was blessed for a Eucharist to be shared at the Rock Island Arsenal. A few stayed behind to pray, the rest moved on to the Arsenal to finish the Liturgy there. Some of us were dropped off at the entrance to the Arsenal (we had written statements to pass out to anyone wanting to know what we were doing.) Gathered around Fort Alexandra (a replica of the first military presence on the Island - pre civil war - the Pentagon also has roots!) we renewed our Baptismal vows and read the Word of God from Ezekial, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Amos, and Mark. Three

of the community (community now because of the shared faith which enabled us to bear witness to the truth) were dropped off in the "belly of the beast" at the steps of the Administration Building. We placed an empty manger on the steps: "Where is the SAVIOR?" Gone to exile! We spilled blood on the manger and the steps.

"A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation: Rachel bewailing her children; no comfort for her, since they are no more." (Jer. 31:15; Mat. 2:18)

Silence now at this gathering.

Then: "What are you doing there? What did you throw on our steps? You can't do this. You'll have to come with us". We were taken and detained for an hour. Those who were praying at the Fort were escorted off the Island to the foot of the bridge where they waited for their three friends to return from the "belly of the beast." Liturgy over, we shared the Eucharist. Liturgy over, witness goes on. The Mass is ended, go in PEACE to live it.

What did we do that day? We gathered together as individuals and as brothers and sisters in Christ to bear witness to the truth. The personal truth that the violence and fear of Herod is in each of us. The collective truth that the "Herod syndrome" with its false sense of security dominates our country. What we did, we did in community. Community as it is meant to be - people made one by our faith in the folly of the Cross, and enabled by that faith and that folly to bear witness to the cross.

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offices for a local community organization. The roots of our work for justice are getting deeper.

Finally, we are saddened this month with the deaths of two people who crossed our paths. Pops was our neighbor across the street. Rick stayed with us several times in the past year.

Though the thought of death isn't really a pleasant one for any of us, I personally feel a real need to share the stories of these people, printed elsewhere in this newsletter. They may never have been mentioned on the news or in the paper before, yet they, as all of us, played their parts in God's story--history. Shalom, friends. Peace, Rick. Adios, Pops.

--Joe Da Via



What do we do, therefore? From this point, where do we go? I believe there is only one way. We take the truth like a lamp and we walk out like the first Apostles to tell the good tidings to whoever

will listen. If history stands in our way, we ignore it. If systems inhibit us, we dispense with them. If dignities weigh us down, we cast them aside.

--Morris L. West,

The Shoes of the Fisherman

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Dangerous Times

There is so much fear and distraction these days over the state of the world--there is sadness in the Pope's Christmas message, in articles, in letters, in all endeavors. And yet surely, "all times," as St. Teresa said, "are dangerous times."

We may be living on the verge of eternity--but that should not make us dismal. The early Christians rejoiced to think that the end of the world was near, as they thought. Over and over again, even to the Seventh Day Adventists of our time, people have been expecting the end of the world. Are we so unready to face God? Are we so avid for joys here, that we perceive so darkly those to come?

---Dorothy Day

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